Bauhaus-Kolloquium: Politics of Research (Weimar, 4–7 Nov 26)

Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Nov 4–07, 2026
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www.bauhaus-kolloquium.de

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XV. International Bauhaus Colloquium | Politics of Research.

Research at universities is inherently political, a fact made all the more evident during times of intensifying social and political polarisation when politicians denounce universities as »enemies«. But also within academia itself, the constitution, purposes, and approaches of research are brought into question. The XV. International Bauhaus Colloquium invites researchers from the humanities, arts, and architecture, from across different discourses and geographies to critically examine the politics that underlie, shape, or result from research. As an interdisciplinary academic event, it aims to create a platform for exploring how research deals with power relations, institutional structures, funding systems, epistemologies, socio-cultural contexts, and dynamic publics. Politics of research manifest themselves on the level of specific research projects as well as on the level of procedures and frameworks as such. In addition to issues of access, representation, and ethics, the Colloquium will address critical and criticising practices. It will also highlight the ways in which research may both reinforce and challenge dominant hierarchies.

Call for Reflections
The XV. International Bauhaus Colloquium seeks to pause daily research routines and common conference formats to reflect on the complex and contingent dynamics guiding research in a multi-perspective world. In line with Bauhaus tradition, the goal is to foster inter- and transdisciplinary exchange between theoretical, creative, and technical/empirical approaches to address the multi-layered politics of research: How do institutional, epistemological, ethical, or aesthetic factors shape research practice? What hegemonial and counter-hegemonial frameworks define research today? How do traditions, structures, and relationships sustain or endanger research? What agency does research still have? And how do these topics manifest themselves differently in philosophically, historically, artistically, or scientifically oriented disciplines?

Contributions may include current and historical case studies, conceptual reflections, and analyses of institutional, social, political, and affective conditions that influence research practices, design, and outcomes. We welcome both traditional and innovative research formats – papers, presentations, panels, design prototypes, installations, performances, audio-visual essays, interactive media, and other practice-based submissions. This inclusive approach aims to expand the ways in which research is shared, understood, and engaged with, fostering inter- and transdisciplinary exchange to reimagine academia and the world otherwise.

Historical Background

Founded in 1976 at the Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen in Weimar (today's Bauhaus-Universität Weimar), the International Bauhaus Colloquium emerged from a specific politics of research. Within the centrally controlled research system of the socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR), it aimed to position academic studies on the historical Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau while connecting them to international discourse beyond the GDR's borders. This was a bold move in a political climate that – in line with the Formalism Debate – had long disapproved of modern art and architecture. Researchers re-evaluated the Bauhaus legacy despite ideological constraints imposed by the state.

Fifty years on, the academic landscape has changed profoundly. Research now operates globally, shaped by neoliberal funding systems that reward competition and notions of »functionality«. New platforms have transformed the speed and dissemination of research designs and outcomes, while participatory approaches value non-traditional methods and invite voices from outside academia. Long-standing biases — Western, white, male — are increasingly being confronted, prompting shifts in both practice and perspective. In various regions around the world, research remains — or is increasingly —restricted as disciplines are dismantled and institutions are shuttered. Authoritarian regimes control topics, personnel, and international relations, or political instabilities disrupt ongoing work. Furthermore, researchers also face challenges in other contexts: unconventional projects often struggle to secure funding, and the spread of misinformation erodes trust in fact-based inquiry. Higher education is drawn into ideological battles, where »cultural warfare« rhetoric undermines not only research content but also the institutions that produce it. The Colloquium confronts these tensions, asking how research can navigate — and reshape — these entangled pressures.

Perspectives

Within this context, the XV. International Bauhaus Colloquium will move beyond its traditional focus on architectural theory and history to an inter- and transdisciplinary exploration of research politics through four perspectives:

Transformative Research

Research is never neutral. State agendas, governance structures, regulatory frameworks, and public opinion continually shape its priorities, access, and dissemination. Policies can legitimise certain fields while marginalising others, and research itself can be co-opted for ideological purposes. However, research design, outcomes and communication also have political impact and transformative potential. Therefore, we ask: What role do researchers play under growing expectations for quick solutions? How does the push towards »problem-solving« narrow research horizons? What becomes of the tacit social contract between researchers and society? And how might the Bauhaus legacy offer a politically charged, interdisciplinary model for transformation?

Research Profits

Economics, too, has its politics. Funding systems, market logics, and resource flows increasingly dictate what is researched and how it is appraised, thereby reproducing existing cultures of knowledge. Competitive grant schemes reward marketable outcomes, leaving little space for speculative or critical inquiry. The dynamics of buzzwords, trends, and fashions that shape politics and public discourse also influence funding priorities. Precarious employment and metrics-driven pro-

ductivity erode academic autonomy and creativity. Intellectual property regimes turn knowledge into a commodity, while global funding inequities entrench North–South imbalances. What happens when private sector influence shapes governance and ethics, or when universities adopt corporate models that prioritise profit over curiosity?

Proximity and Distance
Social and epistemological conditions shape research practices and knowledge production. Relations of proximity and distance regulate visibility, credibility, and access within and across academic worlds. Imbalances in recognition and resources between geographies, research institutions, or disciplines have to be taken into account — especially between the Global North and South. Topical issues of inclusion, equity, and representation challenge entrenched academic power structures. We look at the biases and habitus embedded in philosophical and institutional frameworks and ask whether a new, non-Eurocentric Enlightenment is possible. How do researchers balance neutrality with activism in an unjust and polarised world? What ethical shifts emerge when proximity to communities and research subjects reshapes conventional approaches? What kind of relationship shapes institutions and ableism? And how do memory, identity, and critical theory intersect to open new beginnings while confronting the persistence of the past?

Cultures of Research
Different research practices may be understood as distinct cultural systems that are defined by their respective languages, norms, and epistemologies — often privileging Western paradigms while side-lining Indigenous or alternative ways of knowing. This perspective calls attention to language politics, cultural bias in research design, and the need to »unlearn« dominant frameworks through decolonial, queer, and/or feminist practices. How do disciplinary traditions and prestige affect what counts as valid knowledge? Which barriers persist between theoretical and practical approaches? How do desire and normativity shape intellectual and artistic work? What is the particular role of aesthetics in our post-digital age? How might heritage — both as object and as epistemology — challenge our disciplines? And how can the canon itself be critically re-engaged or dismantled to make room for multiple perspectives and voices?

Call for Papers:
Paper proposals should include an abstract of no more than 450 words. Please add a maximum of 5 key references and 3–5 keywords that best describe your proposal.
Presentations consist of 20-minute slots, followed by 10 minutes of Q&A.

Call for Panels:
Panel proposals should include a session description of no more than 450 words and additional abstracts on each participant’s contribution (maximum 250 words). Please add a maximum of 7 key references for the panel’s approach and 5–7 keywords that best describe your proposal.
Panels consist of a 120-minute slot, which should leave time for Q&A’s or other forms of audience engagement. Panel size may vary, depending on your particular approach. An average size of 3–4 participants is recommended. Diversity across institutions, disciplines, career stage, and gender is strongly encouraged.

Call for Formats:
Proposals of artwork, installations, exhibitions, prototypes, performances, data visualizations,

demonstrations, tutorials, workshops, etc. should include an abstract (maximum 1000 words), explaining the relevance of the proposed format to the Colloquium's theme. Please include equipment, space, and technical requirements, as well as the expected duration. If you submit an artwork, prototype, or any other visual contribution, please include photographs or drawings of the work submitted if possible and applicable.

Biographical Information:
Along with your abstract, please provide a brief biographical note (maximum 100 words) including your institutional affiliation, main research interests, and — if applicable — your most recent publications or exhibitions.

Submission Format:
The conference will be held in English. Submissions are accepted in English only. Please send your proposals as a single PDF document to ibhk2026[at]uni-weimar.de

Deadline for Submission:
All proposals must be submitted by 15 December 2025 (23:59 CET).

Notification of Acceptance:
Applicants will be notified of acceptance by 18 January 2026.

Registration Fee:
A registration fee of 50 Euros may apply, subject to confirmation of conference funding.

www.bauhaus-kolloquium.de

Reference:
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